

Grachev Savors Ironies of Meeting With Perry in Brussels

By ART PINE
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BRUSSELS—Russia's Pavel S. Grachev was the perfect host Wednesday as he opened a meeting here with U.S. Defense Secretary William J. Perry. The irony of the situation only seemed to buoy his mood even more.

"It seems strange to me that I'm welcoming you here to this building today," the Russian defense minister told his American counterpart, smirking at the circumstances. Perry too broke into a grin.

The session over which Grachev was presiding was being held in Conference Room No. 2 at NATO headquarters here, and the sign outside announced "Russia"—for the Russian delegation.

Grachev, a four-star general who made 634 parachute jumps while he was an officer in the former Soviet army, was taking the biggest leap of his career: He was here to sign Russia up for NATO—as a sort of associate member for now.

Moreover, the Russians were not the only military officials from the former East Bloc to rate their own suite at the NATO ministerial meeting here this week. The broad, heavily carpeted concourse that leads to NATO's main meeting chamber was dotted with the oversized military caps of officers from 18 other onetime Commu-

nist countries.

It might have been a meeting of the now-defunct Warsaw Pact, joked a local wag.

The session, which followed a meeting of NATO defense ministers on Tuesday, marked the first meeting of the Partnership for Peace, a kind of auxiliary program that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has set up for former East Bloc countries. And for all of the joking, it was one of those days on which even the most seasoned diplomats and military officers were overcome by the sense that they were witnessing an important piece of history.

"I think everyone is sort of awed by it all," mused a U.S. officer who has spent his career trying to prepare for a possible confrontation with Soviet forces. "I thought I'd never see this come."

To be sure, the Russians will not actually join the PFP, as it is becoming known here, until sometime in early June, when Moscow presents its final application at a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Istanbul, Turkey.

But Grachev was here this week to present formally Russia's preliminary proposal for its terms of membership—ending weeks of hot-and-cold statements from Moscow about whether the Kremlin would or would not sign up.

And, to the relief of Western diplomats here, he was unambiguous about reports that the Russians would insist on special conditions: "Absolutely *nyet*," he told reporters at the opening of the session.

A mood of optimism lasted all day Wednesday. After the morning session, the NATO ministers, Grachev and the defense chiefs of the 18 Partnership for Peace member countries posed for what was deliberately dubbed a "family portrait."

And Ukraine's defense minister, Vitaly Radetsky, who was scheduled to meet with Perry after the session with Grachev, refused to take offense when the American was late.

"We'll make up for it tonight," he said lightheartedly.

The ironies continued into the evening.

After a day of bilateral meetings here in Brussels, Perry and the other ministers flew by helicopter to the Belgian city of Mons for a tour of the new building at the allies' European headquarters that will serve as a military center for Partnership for Peace countries.

The structure, which was completed in 1990, originally was built as an evacuation center in case Western Europe were invaded by the Soviet Bloc. A chunk of the fallen Berlin Wall now serves as statuary at its entrance.

Russian Goals Worry E. Europe

By BROOKS TIGNER
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BRUSSELS, Belgium — Despite assurances from Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev that his government is committed to NATO's Partnership for Peace, there is unease in Eastern European capitals about Russia's long-term ambitions.

"Grachev emphasized repeatedly that Russia is a superpower. This worries us. What does he mean by this?" said Clyde Kull, Estonia's ambassador to NATO and the European Union.

"We have the feeling that superpower means special privileges and interests for Russia. And when a superpower with nuclear arms says it has interests to defend, it can usually pursue them," Kull told *Defense News* May 26.

Grachev, at NATO headquarters here May 24-25, explained Russia's views on Partnership for Peace to the defense ministers of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), a forum that brings together NATO nations with the 22 countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Grachev said Russia will use Partnership for Peace to develop joint military exercises, training, peacekeeping and search-and-rescue activities with NATO.

"To a certain extent, I don't think the Russians themselves

know yet in which direction they're headed," a Hungarian diplomatic source said May 26. "At the same time, their attitude toward Partnership for Peace still is no clearer than before."

Poland's ambassador to Belgium, Andrzej Krzeczunowica, agreed. Referring to Grachev's speech May 25 before NATO and European defense chiefs on how Russia intends to participate in Partnership for Peace, Krzeczunowica said, "My impression is that the arguments were very elastic. You could read many different things into them, if needed."

Grachev said he is seeking greater consultation with NATO counterparts on defense conversion and environmental problems. Grachev did not say when Russia would sign, but indications are it could be before August.

What worries some NACC countries, however, are Grachev's remarks about Partnership for Peace's place in the European security framework.

Grachev noted that one of the goals of Partnership for Peace should be "a collective security system in Europe" that would reinforce the activities of NATO and other structures.

The other structures in question, said Grachev, "are primarily the [Vienna, Austria-based] Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe."

Moreover, Grachev also advocated using Partnership for Peace to turn NACC into a military and political structure independent of NATO.

Such a plan, if carried out, would subordinate NATO to the political leadership of either NACC or the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe — a move the alli-

ance rejects. The East Europeans also reject it as an attempt by Russia to keep a heavy finger on military and security developments in Europe.

"It is quite evident that Russia has a special place in the architecture of Europe," said Poland's Krzeczunowica, "but there is no question of it having a right to look at what NATO is doing. We certainly don't want to see any other country monitoring what we are doing to deepen our relations with NATO."

Karl Lukas, the Czech Republic's ambassador to Belgium, said, "I think NATO and the Partnership countries will have to analyze very carefully what was said by Grachev. It will serve as the basis for their approach to Europe. The situation we see now between Russia and Ukraine is not the most encouraging, I must say."

Lukas was referring to Ukrainian-Russian tensions over the status of the former Soviet Black Sea Fleet and Crimea.

Top Ukrainian officials such as Defense Minister Vitaly Radetsky sought assurances from his NATO counterparts, including U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry, that Russia would be dissuaded from using intimidation.

Another source of concern lies in Russia's military doctrine. Though Grachev announced that it is "purely of a defensive character and not aimed at anyone else," he also made a pitch during talks with NATO and during bilateral consultations with the United States on May 24 to renegotiate terms of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty.

The CFE prevents Moscow from redeploying its troops still in Germany and near its border with Europe to other parts of Russia.



REUTERS PHOTO

All smiles, U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry, left, and Ukrainian Defense Minister Vitaly Radetsky

leave last week's North Atlantic Cooperation Council meeting in Brussels, Belgium. Perry assured Radetsky that NATO would try to dissuade Russia from using intimidation tactics to gain back assets of the Black Sea fleet or fuel nationalism in Crimea. See story, page 4.

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